

Business Summit
February 17, 2010

- Majority of businesses in Greensboro are small
- Focus on “business” is not small
- Use existing staff to answer questions – liaison/ombudsman/advocate within each individual department
- Should not need to know right person to solve problems
- Autonomy of front line staff to make decisions/give positive experience (like Disney)
- Use/publicize Contact Center
- Staff awareness of existing resources for businesses (GTCC, SBTDC, SCORE, ED)
- Web site needs to be more functional and user-friendly, easier to find information/content
- City staff has to use search to find things
- Categories simple, easy to see for business, resident/citizen, have businesses involved with Web redesign
- City Council work on (tax) incentive program to shift to local purchases; measure results
- More active MWBE/HUB outreach
- Partner with other agencies – Follow up!!
- Small business loans: person who can work through this process with the business owner
- Start up orientation for businesses – how tos, financial information, business development plan writing
- Stats on locations – crime analysis, demographics, other similar businesses in area, household income levels
- Proactive outreach about upcoming issues & in general
- Land use/Zoning, planning on business expansion for already located/current business, plans regarding growth where business and neighborhoods meet
- Quarterly newsletter
- Single point of contact for businesses – for all information needed
- Small businesses meet and greets between business owners; create business directory for use with new visitors/businesses
- User friendly website for start ups.

Communication

- Key to small business knowing what is available

Bids – Professional Service Contracts

- Keeping them in the City to generate employment opportunities
- Person available to provide information to everyone (update when you receive business license)
- Facebook page for City
- Database available of opportunities available

Research and Development

- For enterprise development and expansion (retool what we are doing)
- Facebook, phone, computer Web “Mr. or Ms. GSO” – a go to person (knowledge)
- Ombudsman – for events and i.e. “Senior Games”
- Who do you go to have a product you’re developing for the City
- A place at City (person) to give direction through the maze of zoning, licenses, etc.

Desired Assistance for Small Business

- Marketing/business development (education of procurement professionals)
- Clarity of bidding process
- Regular dialogue/access to/with City buyers – decision makers
- Knowledge of resource organizations
- Availability rejected – bid feedback (bid debriefing)
- Contact unbundling
- Clarity of source of funding
- Better advertising of meetings like this
- City services need to be accessible to everyone (i.e. face to face, internet, paper)
- Education and proactive marketing of available resources. (ex-bidding process/MWBE visibility)
- Inclusion of citizens, prospective & existing small business owners to help design new program
- One stop shop for city services
- Sustainable energy –housing (less on SBA) build on ideas for SBP
- Green options
- Energy conservation options
- Over buy – tradeoffs for “GREEN”
- LEED certified – Possible SBA with LEED Programs
- Green environment
- How to utilize – Solar Fund availability
- Options for social service programs – types available
- Rigid vs. Flexibility – requirements for fund disbursements
- More economic attention to how projects, streets, design – R/W are addressed (long term)
- SB – styles – other financial options
- State impacts on local and private SB

- Expand loan program SBA – City
- Home based business ordinance review
- Engage universities
- Access to information
- Center Point at City
- New market tax credit
- Permits
- Ask the experts
- Green business
- Information base resources for companies willing to employ ex-offenders
- Resources (financial) to grow/expand small businesses such as grants (investors)
- Flexible, affordable meeting/office spaces. (renovate more empty buildings)
- Affordable health care benefits with intention to share among other businesses
- Expansion of bureaucracy is not needed – need more responsiveness for current staff – can do attitude
- Eliminate privilege license fee
- Return solid waste to an enterprise fund
- Don't interfere with Business – get out of our way
- Think twice about hiring outside consultants – we have 10 colleges in the area
- Lower taxes, invite investment (i.e. best services at lowest price)
- Tax abatement for new jobs created whether many or few (i.e. help small business as well)
- Encourage better linking of jobs available and job seekers with skills
- Pay staff or citizen 10% of money saved by new ideas (i.e. save taxes and get more bang for the dollar)
- Operate the City like a business, incentivize staying under the budget
- Access to central source of information
- Knowing what resources & services are available
- Promote what's out there – Chamber, Business Incubator, etc.
- Businesses need to reach out too... whose challenge is this?
- Continue to communicate that City wants to work with businesses